SARON MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Saron Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA)
510 Main Street
St. Joseph, MI 49085

Website: www.saronlutheran.org
Email: info@saronlutheran.org
Phone: 269-983-1273
Facebook:www.facebook.com/saronlutheranchurchst.joseph

Saron's Mission: *Joyfully sharing God's love for all!!!*

Reverend James E. Smith, Pastor
Cell: 269-816-3870
Email: pastorjames@saronlutheran.org

Amanda Bradley, Communications Director
Cell: 419-306-5780
Email: info@saronlutheran.org
bradley717@gmail.com

Marcus Roll, Music Director
Email: roll.marcus17@gmail.com

Beth Gray, Organist/Pianist
Email: egrayroll@gmail.com

Ken Boyd, Bookkeeper
Email: financial@saronlutheran.org

Mackenzie Dressander, Nursery Director
Email: mackenzie.trail99@gmail.com

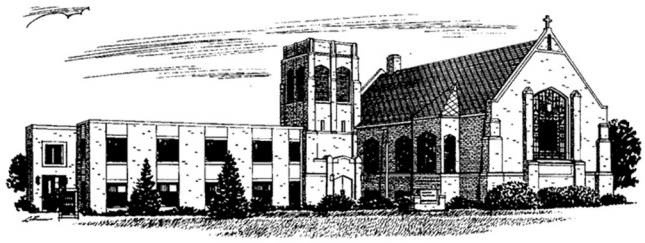
Typical Sunday at Saron:

Fall, Winter and Spring **(through May 17, 2026):**
8:30am Worship On-Location
9:40am-10:30am Adult Bible Study
10am-10:45am Learning Hour for Ages 3-8th Grade
11am Worship with Zoom Option
Nursery Available

Summer Schedule (**begins May 25, 2026**):
10am Worship
On-Location and via Zoom
Nursery Available
No Learning Hour

We hold in prayer:
The Rev. Yehiel Curry,
Presiding Bishop, ELCA
The Rev. Julie Schneider-Thomas, Bishop of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod, ELCA
The Episcopal Diocese of the Great Lakes

Our Companion Synods:
Christian Lutheran Church of Honduras
Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea
Lutheran Church of Latvia



Prayer as Life

Looking for a way to spice up your prayer life? Well, I don't know about *spice*, but one way that helps me is the time-honored Christian pattern of prayer called a *collect.* A collect is the type of prayer we pray in the "Prayer of the Day" right before the readings. And it follows an easy five-step pattern:

1)We address God, usually with an adjective of why God is worthy of praise.
2)We thank God for God's faithfulness in the past.
3)We make our petition; or, as I say, "The Ask."
4)We close with a doxology, or a *praise,* usually to the Holy Trinity.
5)We say Amen, which as the *Small Catechism* tells us means, "Yes, yes, it is going to come about just like this."

So what does it look like? My favorite is the collect for All Saints Sunday (Nov. 2):

*[Part 1]*Almighty God, *[Part 2]*you have knit your people together in one communion in the mystical body of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. *[Part 3]*Grant us grace to follow your blessed saints in lives of faith and commitment, and to know the inexpressible joys you have prepared
for those who love you, *[Part 4]*through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. *[Part 5]***Amen.**

Why does it matter? In a sense, it doesn't. God is happy to hear us praying "in all times and all places."

But prayer does shape us. Parts one, four, and five begin and end our relationship with God in a mindset of praise. And when I look at the interplay between parts 2 and 3: *thanksgiving* and *The Ask*, I learn a couple things. One, I start from a place of gratitude. God has done great things for me, for the church, and for the world before. I focus on the positive. But even more than that, when I reflect on God's prior faithful, loving, and saving actions, it gives me confidence for my Ask: God is going to hear my prayer and not leave me out in the cold—because God's always been reliable.

You can try making your own collect at home! But even better, we can live the prayer: we can live in praise, gratitude, and trust of the God who's always loved us and always will.

Yours in Christ,
Pr. James

General Information

OFFICE HOURS

Pastor James E. Smith
Monday – Thursday
Hours may vary. Appointments are great!
Amanda Bradley (Admin Assistant):
Mondays & Thursdays 10am-2pm
Ken Boyd (Bookkeeper):
Thursday Mornings and by Appointment
Helping Hands Office Volunteers:
Wednesdays 9:00am-11am (approx)

If you or your loved one is need of a visit or pastoral care, please contact Pastor James at 269-816-3870.

Specific questions or concerns may be directed to an appropriate council member or committee liaison:
President – Fran Bolson
Vice President – Erik Bergh
Secretary – Claudia Staude
Treasurer – Ed Brunner
Worship – Marilyn Frey
Learning – Fran Bolson or Scott Gaspari
Outreach – Jim Manore
Facilities – Steve Cook or Ed Brunner
Youth – Chuck Knebl
Support – Jim Manore or Ed Brunner
Hospitality – Merrily Smith or Claudia Staude

Caring and Sharing

Happy Birthday Wishes to Saron's Members!

11/1 Suzy Kohs
11/2 Eric Burrow
11/2 Merrily Smith
11/4 Sterling Carter
11/4 Laura Stark
11/7 Meredith Gacek
11/13 Carter Hohman
11/15 Coanne Hohman
11/17 Dawn Osgood
11/17 Marcus Roll
11/18 Mark Wedde
11/20 Christopher Gaspari
11/25 David Lundgren
11/26 Mary Streufert
11/27 Erik Bergh
11/28 Melanie McCammon
11/30 Denise Cook

Happy Anniversary Wishes to Saron's Members!

11/6 Ken & Janet Boyd
11/21 Deborah & Mark Vollmer
11/22 John & Kerrie Hoodlebrink
11/22 Walter & Sally Schmuhl

If there are any omissions from the birthday or anniversary list, or if a date is incorrect, please let us know so we can get it correct in the future!

BAPTISM

We were blessed to welcome **Isen Caduceus Helmuth** to the Saron family via Holy baptism on October 5, 2025. Isen's parents are Isla & Israel Helmuth. Isen's sponsor is Alexandria Trusov.

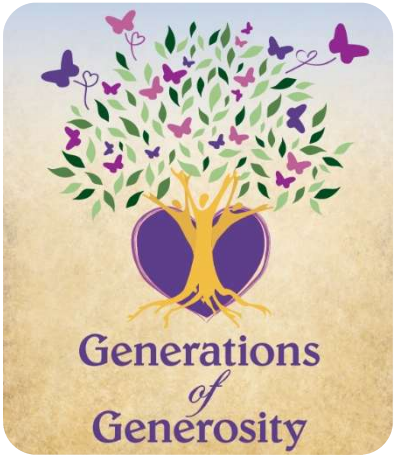
Congratulations, Isen! We look forward to being part of your support system and faith journey!

NEW MEMBERS!

What a joyous day! On October 5, we welcomed nine new members into the Saron family!

Isla & Israel Helmuth with Isen, Eric & Kim Perrin, Rick & Linda Taylor, Dean Warlin, and Mary Lou Giguere (not pictured).

Stewardship Update



We hope you found meaning in the stewardship packet, weekly temple talks and videos, and the prayer labyrinth. We hope you took the opportunity during the six week stewardship season to prayerfully consider the many ways you can *and do* give back to God, Saron and your community. **If you haven't yet turned in your 2026 Commitment sheet and Time & Talent Survey, please do so as soon as possible.** These tools help us with budgeting and will ensure the proper committee leads reach out to get you involved in the areas you are most interested in. This church is built on generations of generous congregants. We are blessed to have you as part of Saron's present so together, we can continue this legacy and bring Saron with us into the future. Thank you!

With the 1st Sunday of Advent quickly approaching on November 30, we want to share the following dates:

- **Wednesdays, December 3 at 6:15pm**
  - Soup Supper followed by a Reader's Theater, focusing on prophets
- **Wednesday, December 10 at 6:15pm**
  - Soup Supper followed by Hanging of the Greens (decorating the church)
- **Sunday, December 14**
  - Youth Christmas Service at 11am
  - Festival of Santa Lucia at 3pm
- **Wednesday, December 17 at 6:15pm**
  - Soup Supper followed by Advent/Christmas Carol Hymn Sing
- **Wednesday, December 24**
  - More Youth Focused Worship at 4pm
  - Christmas Eve Worship with Choir at 8pm
- **Thursday, December 25 at 10am**
  - Christmas Day Worship

Saron Lutheran Church

1875 | 150th Anniversary | 2025

- **PRAYER & MEDITATION GARDEN**

On October 12, we had a celebration & dedication of all we've accomplished so far**.** The main features completed are the prayer nook, an indestructable picnic table with a matching trash receptacle, and an outdoor prayer station. We are on our way to making our green space a peaceful spot for the community!

Future plans for the space relocating the Japanese maple to a new spot in the ground (the current above ground planter is rotting), elemental sculptures and signage to encourage the community to enjoy the space and reinforce our welcome to all.

The extent of our work on the Community Prayer & Meditation Garden is directly tied to the funds we collect. If you would like to contribute, make sure your donation is marked "Prayer Garden."

We wrap up our year of making new memories while commemorating our past with our final events:

- **November Event**: Great Thanksgiving Pie Bake (see back page for more information)

- **December Event**: Festival of Santa Lucia (see next page for more information)

As the endcap to the stewardship season, we celebrated those that have gone before us Dia De Los Muertos style! We had amazing, authentic Mexican food prepared by Patti and her family, along with our own Brooke Henderson. We learned about some of the traditions associated with this celebration and even played a game where as the winner, Scott was picked as tribute to try Patti's hottest homemade salsa. It was a great, and meaningful, afternoon of fellowship.

CELEBRATION OF SANTA LUCIA

Sunday, December 14 at 3pm

This year Saron is co-sponsoring with Vasa (local Swedish-American fraternal, cultural and educational organization) the annual celebration of Santa Lucia. The program will include the telling of the story of St. Lucia, music of the season, hymn singing, and the presentation of the 2025 Lucia and her court. Swedish refreshments will be served. This event is free and open to all.

REMINDER: Set any manual clocks back one hour before going to bed on Saturday, November 1!

We are having a fantastic time in Sunday School this year with our fun, new curriculum! There is always room for more, whenever it works for your family.

We will be starting to work on our Christmas pageant soon and your child may participate even if they do not typically attend Sunday School. Let Kate (kateulrey@yahoo.com) know if your child would like a part, speaking or nonspeaking. The Youth Christmas Service will take place at 11am on Sunday, December 14.

Worship

ASSISTED HEARING DEVICES

Our sound system in the sanctuary came with headphones to assist those having difficulty hearing the worship service. If you are interested, ask Marcus if you can try one out.

SENSORY BAGS

As part of extending an unconditional welcome to all, we have Sensory Bags available for use. These bags contain a variety of fidgets that can help someone feel more able to sit quietly and/or focus. We also have noise canceling headphones for those who are sound sensitive. These brightly colored bags can be found in the narthex.

PRAYER GROUP

You are invited to offer your concerns or thanksgivings via our attendance cards each Sunday. Requests can also be made online via a link in our Thursday email. You may include as much, or little, detail as you wish. Requests are then given to the Monday prayer group. **You are invited to be part of this Monday group at 11am.** We follow a simple format of morning prayer and insert the petitions and prayers for Saron's ministry and the world. Most weeks we are done in 30 minutes.

ALTAR FLOWERS

Sponsor a week by using the link in the weekly email or by contacting the church office. Please note any occasion/thanksgiving to be recognized in the bulletin. **Flowers are now $40 per vase.** Checks are payable to Saron with "Flowers" as the memo. Take them home to enjoy then please **return the vase.**

Nursery service is available during worship for children under five years old (exceptions are made, especially for siblings). There is a live-feed monitor in the nursery where you may keep up with the service if you need to stay with your child. For children five and older, there are options to bring into the sanctuary, such as clipboards with coloring pages, sensory bags (see article above) and children's bulletins. If you need to step out with them to regroup, there are quiet activities in a bin next to the sofa in the narthex. We embrace family units in all stages and welcome wiggles & giggles as a part of worship.

We recognize the worship experience for families may not look the same for all and encourage sharing concerns and suggestions with Mackenzie Dressander (269/944-7753). Please also contact her if you are willing to volunteer to support this important service.

SUNDAY SCRIPTURE READINGS

As you prepare for worship, you are invited to read and reflect on the Scriptures for the day.

November 2: All Saints Sunday
Daniel 7:1-3, 15-18
Psalm 149
Ephesians 1:11-23
Luke 6:20-31

November 9: 22nd Sunday after Pentecost
Job 19:23-27
Psalm 17:1-9
2 Thessalonians 2:1-5, 13-17
Luke 20:27-38

November 16: 23rd Sunday after Pentecost
Malachi 4:1-2
Psalm 98
2 Thessalonians 3:6-13
Luke 21:5-19

November 23: Christ the King Sunday
Jeremiah 23:1-6
Psalm 46
Colossians 1:11-20
Luke 23:33-43

November 30: 1st Sunday of Advent
Isaiah 2:1-5
Psalm 122
Romans 13:11-14
Matthew 24:36-44

Youth Group (middle school & high school age) is still trying to work out a schedule for meetings that will work for our busy students/athletes/artists.

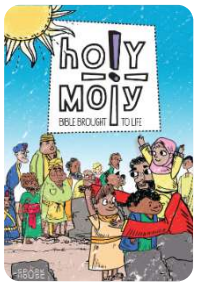
Contact Chuck Knebl at chasknebl@comcast.net with any questions or to be added to the email list.

Learning

SUNDAY LEARNING HOUR

The Learning Hour offers the following options:

- 9:40am-10:30am Adult Forum: High School - Adult
- 10am-10:45am Confirmation: Grades 6-8
- 10am-10:45am Sunday School: Preschool - Grade 5
    - New Classroom!
    - New Curriculum!
    - Make New Friends!
    - **Save the Date**: Children's Christmas Pageant on December 14!

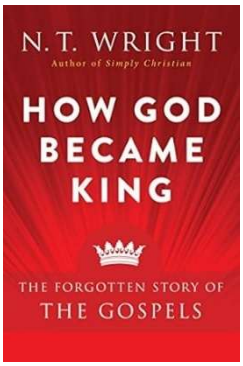


WEDNESDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

Acts of Faith: Tongues of fire, a *Treasure Island*-style sea voyage, Paul's preaching literally boring a man to death: the book of Acts is a feast of the works of the Holy Spirit! Come join our Wednesday morning Bible study as we continue to explore this "act"ion-packed book, every Wednesday at 9:30am in the upstairs lounge. No special materials needed. Come when you can! Contact Pastor James with questions.

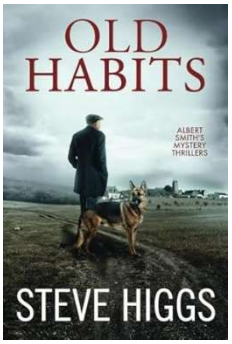
TUESDAY EVENING BIBLE STUDY

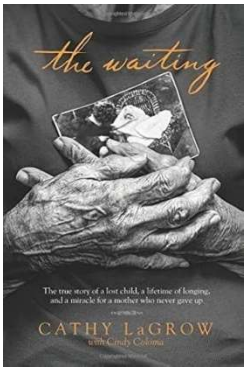
Getting the Gospels Wright: Have we been misreading the key themes of the New Testament for hundreds of years? What would it look like to read the story of Jesus through a new lens? Our Tuesday night Bible study will do just that as we continue to read and discuss N.T. Wright's *How God Became King: The Forgotten Story of the Gospels,* every Tuesday at 6pm in the upstairs lounge. We meet for one hour of discussion, then adjourn to a local restaurant for food and fellowship. All are welcome!



If you have any questions, feel free to call, text, or email:
Don Hafer (269/985-3637, haferdon@gmail.com)
Ed Staude (636/288-1016, staude.edmund@gmail.com)
Eric Standen (269/759-3556, dande-standen@sbcglobal.net)
Pr. James (269/816-3870, pastorjames@saronlutheran.org)

Come join us on **November 2, at 6:30pm in the upstairs lounge**. We will be discussing a mystery titled ***Old Habits: Albert Smith's Mystery Thriller Book 1*** **by Steve Higgs.** "*It's like Jack Reacher at eighty -with a dog. Fast-paced suspense and edge-of-your-seats-thrills*." (Amazon) Dirk DeGraaf has kept his deadly secret for twenty-three years. Not one person knows, until today.




the waiting
The true story of a lost child, a lifetime of longing, and a miracle for a mother who never gave up
CATHY LaGROW
with Cindy Coloma

Then on **December 7,** our choice is ***The Waiting: The True Story of a Lost Child*** **by Cathy LaGrow**. In 1928, 16-year-old Minka was assaulted and raped, resulting in a pregnancy. The baby, Betty Jane, was secretly adopted. Minka searched for her for 77 years. She raised a family, and it was finally her granddaughter, Cathy LaGrow, that writes Minka's story, bringing three generations of an unusual family together. Faith, hope and love is a good theme for the Christmas season.

There is always a seat waiting for anyone who wants to join in some good discussions. All are welcome at any meeting. Questions? Contact Kathy Cowall at (269)428-0354 or kcowall@hotmail.com.

Books are uniquely portable magic.
-Stephen King

So many people enjoy the view of the St. Joe lighthouse against a summer sunset or with fall waves crashing over it, but how much do you actually know about the lighthouse? Join us **Sunday, November 6 at 6:30pm in the upstairs lounge** for a presentation by Kate Ulrey. Maybe she will 'shine a light' on some lesser known details.

Then, because we don't meet during Advent, our **November 23** gathering will help us usher in the holiday spirit. We are once again going to come together to write out Christmas cards for folks in care homes and who often don't receive much attention. Cards and names will be provided, but anyone can contribute to the card stash. The more people that participate, the more greetings individuals will receive. Everyone is invited! Help us reach out to as many as we can.

Contact Ed Staude at 636/288-1016 with any questions.

Women of the ELCA

SARON CHURCH WOMEN

Saron Church Women will meet on **Wednesday, November 12 at 7pm** in the upstairs lounge for the **Annual Meeting**. Business matters will be discussed and voted upon. Thankoffering, as well as the other usual offerings, will be collected. Zoom will not be available. All women of Saron are welcome to attend.

Contact Melanie at 269/449-8399 with any questions.

Hospitality

SUNDAY SNACKS

Who doesn't love a snack during a time of fellowship after the service? If you would like to be a Sunday snack host, sign up via the link in our weekly email or call/email the office so Amanda can sign you up. Please plan for at least 30 to partake. Thank you!

Outreach

NOISY OFFERING

We receive a noisy offering (and those not-so-noisy bills) on the first Sunday of each month.
These gifts are sent to ELCA World Hunger.

Thank you for your continued support!

THE BENTON HARBOR SOUP KITCHEN™
HEART-TO-HEART™

Simple food, honestly sourced and lovingly made creates connections, gives fuel to the fight, and starves ignorance and apathy.
-Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen

On September 25, Marilyn Frey, Mary Zylema, Keith Stevens and Dave & Kathie Bradley assembled and delivered 150 sack lunches to the Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen. The lunches included a sandwich, chips, fruit and cookies baked by Linda Pater, Marilyn Frey, Kathi Anserello and Keith Stevens.

The Soup Kitchen purchased the former Lark's BBQ on Main Street in Benton Harbor. During the extensive renovation, Saron assembled sack lunches at Red Lotus Nutrition and delivered them to the Soup Kitchen to be distributed. We would like to thank Red Lotus for allowing us to pack the lunches in their commercial kitchen. The Soup Kitchen expects to reopen before the end of the year.

Thanksgiving and Christmas are being sponsored by other organizations so we will not need volunteers or cookies until January. If you ever have questions about this outreach effort, contact Kathie Bradley at 269-921-4665.

Thank you to all who continue to support this ministry with your time, contributions, and prayers.
Joyfully sharing God's love for all!

EYE GLASS COLLECTION

Lions RECYCLE For Sight

Do you have old glasses sitting in a drawer? Lions Club has provided a collection box in the narthex. We have several members who are Lions that can deliver our glasses to the club where they will do more good. Thank you!

INCLUSIVITY TASK FORCE

The Inclusivity Task Force is committed to extending a welcome to all. Our congregation adopted the following welcome statement and is a **Reconciling in Christ** church.

As a community of faith who *joyfully shares God's love for all*, we believe our lives and faith are strengthened by diversity. We strive to be a community who welcomes people of every ability, age, citizenship status, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, language, marital status, political perspective, race, and sexual orientation. We are committed to the work of racial equity. Whatever life's circumstance, we openly welcome and value you. We celebrate God's unconditional love and respond joyfully to your presence here. All are welcome. You are welcome.

If you ever have any questions on our inclusivity journey, please feel free to call any one of the task force members:

Lindsay Gaspari:847/373-8826 lindsay.gaspari@yahoo.com
Meredith Gacek:269/235-4530 meredithgacek@yahoo.com

Interfaith Action

Interfaith Action (swmichiganinterfaith.org) is a coalition of over 40 faith communities in Allegan, Berrien, Cass, St. Joseph, and Van Buren Counties. Some members of Saron attend meetings and work with various task force groups. One of the goals of Interfaith Action is to promote understanding and respect for diversity.

Thank you for all the generous donations to the Interfaith Action Migrant Pantry and to those that showed support by attending the Celebration of the Harvest & Harvesters!

Contact Pastor James or Merrily Smith at merrilyannsmith@gmail.com for more information on this group.

Support

The Support Committee typically meets the Tuesday before the third Monday of the month at 8pm via Zoom. Contact Don Hafer with any questions at 269/985-3637.

STOCK DONATIONS

Saron partners with a brokerage firm to accept stock donations. If you would like to donate stock, email Ed Brunner at ebrunner54@gmail.com to receive more information. Thanks!

Facilities

HELPING HANDS

We do all sorts of things from building maintenance to preps for worship in the sanctuary to assembling bulletins and newsletters and so much more. We meet on Wednesdays around 9am and know you are invited – whatever your age, gender, or ability. There is a job for you to use your helping hands!

FALL CLEANUP

Saturday, November 15
9am.

Bring gloves, rakes, blowers and tarps. Thank you!

Miscellaneous Bits of News

Lutheran World Relief

Saron Church Women thanks everyone who contributed items for Lutheran World Relief. The total was **59 personal care kits** and **11 fabric kits**. The shipping donation totaled **$310**. Thanks to Colleen Lundgren, Marilyn Lucy and Melanie McCammon for boxing up the kits. Thanks also to Mary Alice Brunner to transporting everything to the collection site in Portage. All donations are greatly appreciated and will be used by many people in need. **Thanks again for supporting this project!**

SARON LUTHERAN CHURCH
510 MAIN STREET
ST. JOSEPH, MI 49085

Website: saronlutheran.org
Email: info@saronlutheran.org

A Congregation of:
The North/West Lower Michigan Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

NOVEMBER 2025 NEWSLETTER

Thanksgiving Worship & The Great Thanksgiving Pie Bake!

You are invited to join us on

Tuesday, November 25 at 7pm

for worship then we'll head down to the Fellowship Hall to eat some pie and vote for our favorites! If you want to submit a pie for judging, just bring it with you. No need to register in advance. We'll have an impartial volunteer checking them in and making labels with descriptions (no names!).

Pumpkin, apple, pecan, cherry…who will come out on top?
Will we get at least 150 slices to celebrate 150 years?

NOVEMBER 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
2 8:30am Worship 9:40am Adult Learning Hour 10am Youth Learning Hour 11am Worship with Zoom Option 6:30pm Book Club	**3** 11am Prayer Group	**4** 6pm Bible Study	**5** 9am Helping Hands 9:30am Bible Study	**6** 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal	**7**	**8**
9 8:30am Worship 9:40am Adult Learning Hour 10am Youth Learning Hour 11am Worship with Zoom Option 6:30pm Forum & Fellowship	**10** 11am Prayer Group	**11** 6pm Bible Study 8pm Support Meeting	**12** 9am Helping Hands 9:30am Bible Study 7pm Church Women Annual Meeting	**13** 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal	**14**	**15**
16 8:30am Worship 9:40am Adult Learning Hour 10am Youth Learning Hour 11am Worship with Zoom Option	**17** 11am Prayer Group 7pm Council Meeting **Newsletter Articles Due**	**18** 6pm Bible Study	**19** 9am Helping Hands 9:30am Bible Study	**20** 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal	**21**	**22**
23 8:30am Worship 9:40am Adult Learning Hour 10am Youth Learning Hour 11am Worship with Zoom Option 6:30pm Forum & Fellowship	**24** 11am Prayer Group	**25** **7pm Worship followed by The Great Thanksgiving Pie Bake**	**26** 9am Helping Hands	**27** **Happy Thanksgiving!**	**28**	**29**
30 **1st Sunday of Advent** 8:30am Worship 9:40am Adult Learning Hour 10am Youth Learning Hour 11am Worship with Zoom Option						